

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-02 INR-10
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R 131614Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4232
INFO AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

UNCLAS PARAMARIBO 527

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PEPR SPOP NS GY
SUBJ: GUYANESE SEEKING A HAVEN IN SURINAM?

1. ACCORDING TO LOCAL PRESS REPORTS, UNUSUALLY LARGE NUMBERS OF GUYANESE ARE ATTEMPTING TO CROSS INTO SURINAM OVER THE CORANTIJN RIVER (WHICH SEPARATES GUYANA AND SURINAM) VIA THE SINGLE FERRY OPERATING BETWEEN SPRINGLANDS IN GUYANA AND NIEUW NICKERIE IN SURINAM. IT IS SAID THAT THE INCREASED MOVEMENT OF GUYANESE TO SURINAM BEGAN ABOUT TWO WEEKS AGO AND THAT THERE ARE NOW ABOUT SIX HONDRED GUYANESE WAITING IN SPRINGLANDS TO MAKE THE CROSSING. SURINAMERS HAVE REPORTEDLY BEEN ADVISED TO TO CROSS THE CORANTIJN INTO GUYANA BECAUSE THE RETURN TRIP PRESENTS SO MANY DIFFICULTIES.

2. COMMENT: THERE MAY BE SEVERAL REASONS FOR THE BACKLOG IN PASSENGERS FOR THE FERRY, BUT AT LEAST ONE EDITORIAL HAS TIED THE EXODUS TO DESIRE ON THE PART OF MANY GUYANESE, ESPECIALLY EAST INDIANS, TO FLEE DETERIORATING ECONOMIC CONDITIONS AND BECAUSE THEY FEEL DISCRIMINATED AGAINST BY THEIR GOVERNMENT. OTHER REASONS INCLUDE THE TRADITIONALLY SIZEABLE MOVEMENT OF PEOPLE ACROSS THE CORANTIJN (THE POPULATION ON BOTH SIDES OF WHICH IS MAINLY UNCLASSIFIED

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EAST INDIAN--HINDUSTANIS IN SURINAM--WHO MAINTAIN MANY FAMILY AND BUSINESS TIES ACROSS THE BORDER) ESPECIALLY AT FESTIVAL TIMES SUCH AS TOOK PLACE THE WEEKEND OF MARCH 24-26, AND A REPORT THAT THE FERRY IS OPERATING LESS FREQUENTLY THAN USUALLY SO THAT AUTHORITIES CAN BETTER CONTROL THE FLOW OF PEOPLE. IN ADDITION SOME PEOPLE MAY BE ENTERING SURINAM ONLY TEMPORARILY TO PURCHASE ESSENTIAL COMMODITIES

NOT READILY AVAILABLE IN GUYANA OR TO TAKE SHORT-TERM
EMPLOYMENT AT WAGES SUBSTANTIALLY ABOVE WHAT THEY MIGHT BE
ABLE TO EARN IN GUYANA.

3. EMBASSY WOULD APPREICATE ANY INFORMATION DEVELOPMED BY
EMBASSY GEORGETOWN CONFIRMING THAT ESPECIALLY LARGE NUMBERS
OF GUYANESE ARE LEAVING THE COUNTRY. THERE IS A LATENT
CONCERN IN SURINAM ABOUT THE PRESENCE HERE OF SIGNIFICANT
NUMBERS OF GUYANESE, AND WE ARE UNCERTAIN WHAT SORT OF
TREATMENT GUYANESE ATTEMPTING TO ENTER SURINAM ARE LIKELY
TO RECEIVE UNDER SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES.
ZURHELLEN

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